

Health Consultation

Vermiculite Northwest
1318 Maple Street, Spokane, Washington

July 22, 2004

DOH 334-276 July 2004

Prepared by

**The Washington State Department of Health
Under a Cooperative Agreement with the
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry**



Foreword: ATSDR's National Asbestos Exposure Review

Vermiculite was mined and processed in Libby, Montana, from the early 1920s until 1990. We now know that this vermiculite, which was shipped to many locations around the U.S. for processing, contained asbestos.

The National Asbestos Exposure Review (NAER) is a project of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). ATSDR is working with other federal, state, and local environmental, and public health agencies to evaluate public health impacts at sites that processed Libby vermiculite.

The evaluations focus on the processing sites and on human health effects that might be associated with possible past or current exposures. They do not consider commercial or consumer use of the products of these facilities.

The sites that processed Libby vermiculite will be evaluated by (1) identifying ways people could have been exposed to asbestos in the past and ways that people could be exposed now and (2) determining whether the exposures represent a public health hazard. ATSDR will use the information gained from the site-specific investigations to recommend further public health actions as needed. Site evaluations are progressing in two phases:

Phase 1: ATSDR has selected 28 sites for the first phase of reviews on the basis of the following criteria:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) mandated further action at the site based upon contamination in place

- or -

The site was an exfoliation facility that processed more than 100,000 tons of vermiculite ore from Libby mine. Exfoliation, a processing method in which ore is heated and “popped,” is expected to have released more asbestos than other processing methods.

The following document is one of the site-specific health consultations ATSDR and its state health partners are developing for each of the 28 Phase I sites. A future report will summarize findings at the Phase I sites and include recommendations for evaluating the more than 200 remaining sites nationwide that received Libby vermiculite.

Phase 2: ATSDR will continue to evaluate former Libby vermiculite processing sites in accordance with the findings and recommendations contained in the summary report. ATSDR will also identify further actions as necessary to protect public health.

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has prepared this health consultation in cooperation with ATSDR. A part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, ATSDR is the principal federal public health agency responsible for health issues related to hazardous waste. This health consultation was prepared in accordance with methodologies and guidelines developed by ATSDR.

The purpose of this health consultation is to identify and prevent harmful human health effects resulting from exposure to hazardous substances in the environment. In general, health consultations focus on specific health issues so that DOH can respond to requests from concerned residents or agencies for health information on hazardous substances. DOH evaluates sampling data collected from a hazardous waste site, determines whether exposures have occurred or could occur, reports any potential harmful effects, and recommends actions to protect public health. The findings in this report are relevant to conditions at the site during the time of this health consultation, but they should not necessarily be relied on if land use or site conditions change in the future.

For additional information or questions regarding DOH or the contents of this health consultation, please call the health advisor who prepared this document:

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For more information about ATSDR, contact the ATSDR Information Center at 1-888-422-8737 or visit the agency's Web site: www.atsdr.cdc.gov.

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